

ESSAY.

ON

PRUDENCE.

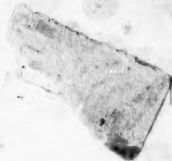
BY A LOVER OF PEACE.

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1838.

1753



REPORT OF THE

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PRUDENCE.

AMONG the virtues which adorn and bless mankind in all conditions, even in domestic and family intercourse, that of prudence, though among the lesser kind, must ever hold an important and distinguished rank ; whether its influence be weighed according to the effects immediately, or remotely brought into operation. Its connexion with minute objects, far from what would at first appear to a superficial observer, may be considered as a proof of its importance ; for these are the things that must necessarily engross the attention of nearly all, the greatest part of their lives. Besides, a thousand little cares and trifles are to direct us in whatever business we engage, though of ever so important a nature. Ridicule and disgust will often be the immediate and lasting consequences of perhaps only neglecting to assist a lady into a vehicle, making an awkward bow, or of spitting tobacco juice on a clean floor, through a little carelessness and inattention. " For want of a nail the shoe was lost ; for want of a shoe the horse was lost ; and for want of a horse the rider was lost, being overtaken and slain by the enemy ; all for want of a little care about a horse-shoe-nail," as poor Richard said.

A deviation from the rules sanctioned by prudence is the more dangerous, as it is an hidden enemy and takes us captives unawares. The storm arises on a sudden, when our eyes are closed against its threatening and appearances, and carries us far down the flood of repentance and regret. As its causes are generally trifling, we are carried to a greater length in misconduct ; not suspecting that a small coal of fire, apparently safe in its proper and

ordinary corner, doing no harm, is to be the means of the conflagration of a populous city, and reducing thousands to beggary and want.

The violation of prudence arises, either from inattention and mistake, aside from any moral depravity; or from carelessness, generally a negative wrong; or sometimes possibly from an unfortunate ebullition of passion with design, invariably a positive wrong; all which, whatever be one's condition or standing, it behooves him to oppose and be on his guard against, if he would escape the stings they leave behind. Thus much being premised as to the manner in which opposition to the authority of prudence conducts itself; we propose to discuss the subject, by particularizing some of the conditions in which the actors or violators are placed, and their violations. We shall consider it as respects; 1. Family concerns; 2. Matters of love; 3. Conversations between neighbours and friends; 4. The use and management of money; 5. Religion; and 6. Conclude with some general remarks and observations.

1. FAMILY CONCERNS.—Here a wide field is opened for the careful and constant exercise of the feelings and forbearance, that are dictated and enforced by prudence. It is at the fireside, in the midst of friends and of near and dear connexions, that we pass a great portion of our lives. Companions in marriage are in the society of each other a great deal; their children, also are with them. And although in general, we do not like to believe that serious differences should exist in the bosoms of lovers, participating in the sweets of connubial intercourse; yet facts and experience attest the truth in melancholy and painful language, that even those who are united together in the bonds of Hymen, are sometimes most unhappily at variance, far beyond what might be thought possible of those in such a relation. How many are there of our observation, painfully differing with each other in the trifling things of a domestic nature; such as dress, household apparatus, and economy in the affairs of their children, as well as in religion and affairs

of more serious import; all for want of a little prudence, either on one side, or both sides! ah, how much is the felicity of the conjugal estate, marred and lessened, through the rash and ungenerous treatment of husbands and wives towards each other, only in the manner simply in which they express their reciprocal language and impressions, though they relate perhaps only to the trifling affairs of the house! Mistaken apprehension on either side, sometimes enkindles a fire of an enormous size. "Trifles light as air," swell into causes of the most serious difficulty and distrust. First, a want of candour or attention, creates a fancied inquietude or sort of jealousy; next the passions swollen with ill-humour or fomented to rage, the parties are engaged in vehement disputes and altercations; till at length all decency and moderation, are utterly forgotten, or trampled upon with disdain in violent abuse and flagellation.

Generally in all disagreements and tumults that are carried to a great length, blame is found on both sides; and we hope we may be forgiven, if we are compelled to say that even the fairest portion of the creation, are sometimes found to descend from the modesty and virtue, and the peculiar delicacy that characterize their sex, into the despicable petulancy and wrangling of scolds, and even the violence and blows of ruffians. Whose fault may be the greatest in the affrays that sometimes follow their jealousies and animosity, we shall not, in this place, attempt to settle or discuss. That men are often guilty of the most shameful neglect and abuse, in the treatment of their unfortunate companions, is a truth, to which almost every village sadly bears witness. They often forget their duties to their wives and families and do wrong. And their worst enemy, spirituous liquor, too fatally urges them to continued scenes of misconduct, so that it must be acknowledged, when the ruthless hand of poverty drags the unhappy wife of the drunkard to the steep of despair, pity and charity ought in justice to be extended to her, even though she herself be guilty of criminality, and for a time forsake the path of duty.

Could husbands and wives only partially submit themselves to such a line of conduct and deportment, as Christian love and charity would dictate, all would be changed; and in the place of imprudence and its varied evils, might be seen the mild radiance of peace, with happiness and a hope of tranquillity. But the world is miserably depraved, and demoralization and vice, as well as ferocity and wickedness, have an unhappy triumph over both males and females. Such being the case, we are to bear in mind what sort of materials compose the union. Were the minds of all whose characters we are now attempting to pourtray, of that happy make which belongs to those of delicate sensibility; and who are ardently fixed by a peculiarity of temper and thought to an attachment founded on just appreciation of views and feelings; and, at the same time, educated to think alike, and to glory in a perseverance in virtuous habits, some of our reflections here would not apply. These, however, are few in number, and far behind in what the subject of our discourse would lead them to be. Many others undoubtedly are discouraged by the wide difference they find between themselves and their companions, who are sometimes almost as unworthy of their good offices, as they are of their society. And the world is so much blinded and overcome by passion, that when the grosser sorts of wrong are found to triumph and prevail, and lead captive their votaries to remorse; we cannot in reason expect that much prudence should remain there, to mitigate the pains produced. Unhappy matches are often formed which cannot be dissolved; but the peace and good of families require, that a constant care and prudence should be practised between the parties, both to assuage the wounds received, and to guard against a further encroachment on their feelings. The dearest interests of families are involved in the formation of marriage connexions: and can parents and those whose province it is to advise in such cases, be too careful of the trust reposed in them? and ought they not to strive to the utmost, to impress such feelings and principles on the

tender and uninformed minds of young persons, as save them from the griefs and disappointments, that so often ensue hasty and improvident marriages?—A more particular consideration however of this branch of our subject, belongs to the next division.

A variety of dispositions, tempers, and minds, are brought together in the relation of husband and wife; and perhaps it will not excite wonder, when differences occur among those of diverse habits and feelings, that they should lose sight of prudence, especially when virtues and graces of a higher order are neglected and forsaken. But even the harmony of kindred souls, only by neglecting suitably to attend to the trifling courtesies which go so far in constituting the felicity of domestic life, especially when the flowers of youth are fading, or have ceased to bloom, and old age and disease appear in their haggard forms; even their wonted harmony and concord, are turned into disagreeable sensations and serious inquietude.

The inordinate love of money is styled "the root of all evil:" but as here, the property of the wife is the property of the husband, except estate of a particular kind, the dissensions arising from that source, have not a very dangerous influence over them; so that no great space is here opened for the evils of imprudence. But the treatment of the important subject of religion, which we are in its proper place to open, particularly in this relation, is often a great piece of imprudence. As nothing can interest us more, so when we are restrained either by ridicule or other means, from worshipping according to the dictates of our consciences, or from spreading or enjoying our faith, it is calculated to produce the most poignant grief. Surely too much prudence cannot be left unpractised by companions, regarding a thing of such awful and momentous concern—religion.

As the want of prudence in respect to their conduct and conversation between themselves, is productive of much mischief and unhappiness; so the part they sometimes take against each other in the management of their children,

also, is operative of pernicious effects. The government and management of children, are of no trifling concern; whether we consider their moral conduct, their progress in learning, or the tender concern of parents themselves. The seeds of honour, or of reproach and ruin, are sown in early life. The usefulness of the greatest portion who honour mankind by their virtues, and by acting the noble part of philanthropists, may be traced in general to the impressions imbibed in juvenile years; when a thirst for knowledge is strong and ardent, and the mind is stimulated to vigorous exertion, by a love of glory, and by expectations of future enjoyment in the scenes of life. Then is the time to nip vice in its early bud, check folly in the very beginning of the causes of their and soul in a mutual suppression of the causes of their after stages, by prudent correctives and a careful observation of genius, disposition, company, and books; for when principles of virtue are sown on early ground, and have grown only to a little height; they will go a great way in saving the subjects from a downward course, till all danger is appalled, by their full confirmation.

It is granted that the worst effects of the unnatural treatment of children, when one punishes for this, and the other commends and connives at the crime, and, vice versa, are seen in the period of childhood, and are among those of inferior and low minds; but we will hazard the assertion, that even in a more advanced period, when the subject of authority begins to look around upon the world, and have ideas of his own; this want of union between parents in his management and correction, still dangerously impedes his progress in a proper course. But not to say too much upon this, we proceed to enlarge our observations on the relation subsisting between parent and child.

The law of nature, which regards all the circumstances that conduce to the well-being of its subjects, requires that children should be under the authority and control of their parents. Their minds are young and tender, and are by no means qualified to be judges in questions

against them; much less are they justifiable in rising against their express commands and prohibitions. Their being and all their gifts are derived from them, and on them, for a long time, they are dependent for support and for bread. Extreme cases may occur in which the rule of children being required to obey their parents, ought to be dispensed with; as if a parent should command a child to commit a heinous crime, or to do an unlawful act, there being exceptions to most general rules. But the law, in its general operation, is founded on imperious necessity, and never varies from the dictates of justice and reason. As this is beyond controversy, our consideration of prudence, must resume itself here, in an attempt to disclose some of the best means by which its violation may be guarded against.

In the government of a child, prudence requires that his early disposition should be carefully attended to, and all the little biasses that from time to time may influence or direct his mind. Some are to be flattered, others to be forced into duty; some are easily led by trifles and promises, while others are directed only by the rod: but it ought always to be used with a sparing hand, and deferred to the last. Though many are of opinion that corporeal punishment ought never to be inflicted upon children; yet experience shows that many are of such a make and are addicted to such habits, it is impossible to govern them without; and we leave it to the best and most experienced teachers, as well as the most observing of parents, whether the moderate use of the rod is not sometimes the only adequate mode of correction. But it is a trite observation of a celebrated newspaper writer, that "the true power of parents over their children, is that of swaying their inclinations; the power of withdrawing their inclinations from one direction, and settling them down in another." And, (continues he,) "it is not hard words nor hard blows that can always gain this point; for the will in general is wrought upon by other methods." Further, if parents would be strictly prudent, they ought also always to be careful not to set bad exam-

ples before their children. The period of youth, as has been observed, is the time in which those impressions are made, and those habits contracted which govern, in a greater or less degree, through life. The mind then may be compared to fair, clean, white paper; which is either daubed with rude blots and blemishes, and defaced with unseemly and coarse scrawls, or exhibits a grand display of finely executed drawings, stately temples and palaces, or a nice performance of elegant penmanship. At that critical period, all the sounds that reach the ear are retained; and all the procedures and actions that are observable, are deeply impressed upon the memory. They gaze and are astonished; they look and pant for enjoyment, possession or knowledge—inquire and are answered; but each answer is only an opening to ten thousand more questions, to them equally interesting. Then the mind is forming, ideas are treasured up, habits contracted and principles imbibed, which are to influence for ever; so that at that time, particularly, it is necessary that correct precept and example should go hand in hand; for if a child perceives his parents doing that wickedness which he is warned to shun, the prohibition will be of little avail.

2. MATTERS OF LOVE.—In one sense love implies the tender feelings and sympathy of nature, that exists between the two sexes in the morning and meridian of life, when the passions are eager—attachment is strong, sighs are mutual, and nature's divine law is seen to be fulfilled. Sometimes it means an attachment to one's country; or to riches; and generally a desire after, and good wishes in favour of any particular object. Its grand signification, however, is confined to the deeds performed and the designs that are carried into execution, by the Supreme Being, as respects the best good of the universe, the happiness of his creatures, his own honour and eternal glory. But we are in this place only to advert to those rules of prudence proper to be observed by us in respect to the first sort. And as it is the strongest of our passions, so its right and judicious, or injudicious man-

agement, is productive of great enjoyment, or of great grief and disappointment.

In nothing, many times, is there found such a total dereliction and contempt of prudence, especially among the younger sort, as in the choice of companions. Urged by an attractive, a most powerful pleasure, they hardly take any thought of the future, in the gratification of propensity. Passion invariably points to present enjoyment; but prudence, more mild, pleads for them in the language of friendship, to shun the rocks and quick-sands of a rash and unadvised course: passion, blind to interest and dead to virtue, loudly calls for its desired object: prudence, urges to manly deeds, and eloquently entorces the necessity of a little consideration and circumspection: and while passion is yielding to despair, and plunging deep into folly and misadventure, prudence shows the benefit of resignation. It lays bare the thorns of a hasty, a luckless and an irrevocable doom; and in the warning voice of benevolence asks a hearing, to prevent the mischiefs and pains of a sudden decision of questions, that involve the peace of families and friends, and the happiness of one's whole life.

The bold seducer of female innocence, is not to be brought into view here; we are discoursing only upon prudence. But when we consider what numbers of young men of fortunes, education, and the most distinguished talents and acquirements, are ruining themselves, by an inordinate indulgence of this propensity, with the aid of drunkenness; we are led to wish, were it possible, that something more might be done, to prevent the miseries, diseases, the griefs of friends and untimely deaths, which these demons are hurling among them. Alas! warning and exhortation, are too torpid, too cold and uninteresting, effectually to arrest their progress, or to mitigate their evils. Nothing but public example, the strong arm of the law, and an universal execration of them, by the determined virtue of the mass of the community, can be of the least avail. And may the exertions

of Christians, the lovers of order and all the benefactors of mankind, continue to reap their rewards.

The world abounds with a rich variety of good things, and they are all calculated to administer comfort and delight; if we use them aright, and take care to preserve temperance and moderation. The enjoyments resulting from the strong ties of this passion, if circumscribed within the bounds of prudence and reason, would doubtless be of the choicest kind; instead of being, as they now often are, the seeds of corruption and the means of shame and reproach. Many of the best things when perverted and abused, become the worst: just so it is with this. Love, in its genuine nature, is mild and gentle like the lamb, and wears a serene aspect; but by being turned into lust, it is only a coarse gratification. Heaven is made a place of hell; the rosy smiles and heartfelt joys of love, are exchanged for low and swinish indulgence; and while the one crowns its possessor with true and substantial enjoyment, the other loses the dignity of the rational faculties, wages war against virtue, and destroys the health of its deluded followers. Let us consult prudence only, we need go no further, and we cannot fail to avoid the latter, as the murderer of youthful hopes—their bitter enemy. We are led to see the road of honour and purity, at the same time, also, we discover the track of the destroyer. Oh, that the first might be the only avenue, and the other be for ever unknown!

Here sensuality is seen to rule over its victims; there you will find avarice holding its iron sway over the frozen hearts of its subjects, and usurping the seat of the heavenly inhabitant, banishing at once the mildness of her mien and the graces of her attraction, for the possession of what are called—riches; but which, managed as they are by some, have very little to do with happiness. There are many lovers who are kept from a participation of the advantages of matrimony by poverty, and happy are they who have a competence for all the proper enjoyments of life; and those who are rich, too, that really love, for riches

when applied to rational purposes, are advantageous indeed. But let none sacrifice the tenderness and emotions of love, for the sordid considerations of avarice; let none lose sight of prudence, whether it concern the things pertaining to that, or the necessary and useful possession of worldly interest; but let it have a constant sway over the minds and hearts of all.

The attachment of young persons of the two sexes to each other, is sometimes attended with such peculiar and strong emotions; that when they suffer themselves entirely to be carried away with them, on a failure of their expectations and hopes, they often prove the means of the deepest woe and keenest disappointment. But however strong this attachment for particular persons often is, and however bitter the disappointment that may follow it, we are far from considering that it can be a sufficient reason for any to abandon themselves to despair, as they sometimes do, and * * * *. The attachment is generally a matter of mere fancy and caprice, and often rests on falsehood, mistake, or delusion. All men and all women, though not exactly on a level in parts and abilities in a great many respects, are very much alike. And what qualities or virtues we would ask, are there inherent in any one woman or one man, that cannot be found in hundreds and thousands of others? None. It is idle, then, and worse than idle to suppose that any thing can belong to a particular woman or man, that, of itself, ought to make one very happy or very miserable. None but fools and madmen, or those destitute of virtue, will suffer themselves to be materially affected with crosses of that nature. The philosopher and Christian will spurn at them as of no consequence, and always treat them with indifference. But all cannot or will not be Christians, nor philosophers. On the contrary, numbers are burying themselves deep in the miseries of these disappointments and defeats. Were they governed by prudence a little more, not suffering themselves to be the dupes of the devil in being chained to a mere worm, might not a little of the poison be prevented? would not the growing

influence of these passions so violent, and, as they are in some stages, almost uncontrollable, be deprived of some of their stings, or, considerably diminished?

In the choice of companions, particularly, we need the aid and counsel of prudence.—The impetuosity of the torrent of passion, is such, when running with its full force, that all the beacons of this friendly adviser, are either violently torn from their foundations by the raging of the billows, or wholly disdained as unworthy of notice. These beacons teach us to be calm and collected, to weigh well the conditions and circumstances, the temper, disposition and character of applicants; before we suffer ourselves to be ingulphed in a pit, which has no deliverance nor respite. And our duty is, to preserve these edifices in good repair, and always to regard their warning and entreaties as designed for our best good.

It is hardly necessary to say, that the utmost attention should always be paid to the rules of decorum and propriety, which the common voice of mankind has established in the intercourse between the sexes. Politeness, and urbanity of behaviour, ought to be understood and practised among all; but more especially when we are among the fair. Then we are under the strongest obligations to observe these rules of civility; for nothing surely can be much more discordant to the sentiments of the virtuous part of the sex, than a contempt of modesty and decency in their presence; which is not only a violation of the rules of prudence; but of other duties.

3. CONVERSATION BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS.

How often are the fires of jealousy, contention and lasting dislike enkindled by the imprudent speeches, the detraction and backbiting of neighbours and friends; and how easily, by a little timely care and prudence, might they all be wholly prevented, never thought of, nor brought into the view of the world, to make it miserable, disgrace men in the social state, and render it (instead of being the means of improvement and melioration) a security for slanderers, for ungenerous, and oftentimes unprovoked destroyers of each other's good name and reputa-

tion! There are a thousand trifling words that may be thrown out, which, though not by any means designed to injure reputation nor to provoke jealousy, are always received and heard of, with tokens of disgust, ill-humour and resentment. They excite disagreeable feelings, and always make impressions unfavourable to those from whom they proceed; whether they are spoken before the face, or behind the back. Might it not always well become those who are in the habit of dealing so profusely in words of censoriousness and scandal, to bethink themselves what possible good it can do them, to be so free with their neighbours; and what will be the probable and natural result of saying every thing they do, to their detriment? are we not bound to think a little before we suffer ourselves to speak, and under obligations not to indulge ourselves so much, without restraint or control, in permitting the tongue to run on (as it apparently so often does) without the least share of prudence, or discretion?

There are two springs of moving principles, that chiefly operate upon persons who violate the rules of prudence, in their conversation with and treatment of neighbours and friends; vanity and malice. They are sometimes at work in the dark or behind one's back, and sometimes in his presence. Vanity, it must be acknowledged, has a perpetual control over the minds and conduct of mankind, in some place or other; and none, not even the best and wisest, can be entirely preserved from its diminutiveness and ridiculous folly. Its influence is universal. Men are proud of, and vain with, they know not what. The arrogant scribbler, with eager eye, and a glare of boasting and triumph, looks around for the homage which his vanity teaches him to expect will be rendered him on account of, what he thinks, are his matchless and inimitable productions. Here may be seen a fine belle, tossing herself round a gaily decorated room, elated and almost enraptured with the splendour of her beauty. There you will find myriads of thronging loggerheads and conceited coxcombs, almost tickled to death with their long tassels, sleek jackets and shining boots and buttons. In

religion, also, what absurdities and nonsense are received as most essential and palpable truths, that, of themselves, are as unconnected with duty and real religion, as any thing possibly can be; and how vain and presumptuous, oftentimes, are religious disputants, when they suppose they have gained a point, while all the time, the Lord knows they are far enough from being in the right. Truly it may be said mankind are fools indeed. But if they would exercise their reason and employ their powers as they might do, they would avoid many of its bad effects in the management, or rather mismanagement of the tongue, at the expense of their fellows and neighbours. We acknowledge that it is natural for mankind to be dictated by vanity, and perhaps have too much wandered from our subject to exemplify the truth; but certainly bounds ought to be set to it, that it may not operate injuriously, or contravene the maxims of prudence.

Of vanity, there may be seen a great variety of kinds, several of which often operate upon the same subject or person, though some of them may do no harm. And in general, one sort only is directly calculated to injure neighbours and friends; (*viz.*) a mistaken belief that a censuring and contempt of them especially those who may have acquired a degree of celebrity, will raise the persons who are dictated by it higher in the estimation of those in whose presence they are; than they otherwise would be, either for superior knowledge, or quickness of discernment. With the materials of one edifice, they expect to build another; supposing that they cannot better be employed in making themselves noted and important, than by attacking those who have distinguished themselves, either as scholars, disputants, or warriors; or in professional enterprize and exertion. But here it must be confessed that envy (as it is somewhat allied to malice) is often at work at the same time with the thing so prevalent among mankind which we are now upon, (*viz.*) vanity, especially in the hostile and illiberal attempts at defacing the fair temple of honour and reputation. A prudent man not only avoids the criminality of slan-

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der and falsehood; but studiously endeavours so to con-
 duct himself, as not unnecessarily, or without some special
 and urgent reason, to speak disrespectfully, or to the de-
 triment of his neighbours at all; even though the facts
 with which he might wield the sword of attack and re-
 proach, should be strictly true. He minds his own affairs,
 and is never a busy-body in other men's matters, careful-
 ly shunning all appearance of evil, and thus passes through
 life innocently, while he is respected and beloved by all.

The want of prudence (which may be the commence-
 ment of a series of crimes) arising from malice, demands
 an attentive consideration and as stern a reprehension.
 This generally appears here in the shape of revenge,
 which is a mean retaliation for injuries either imagined or
 actually received, and can do no kind of good nor prevent
 any evil; but on the contrary, is always an aggravation
 to injured feelings, and the rage on both sides, tending to
 perpetuate the violence, and blow afresh the fires of con-
 tention, at every repetition; though as we are upon pru-
 dence only, we are not here to notice it in its worst
 stages. The Christian precept in such cases, which
 should always be attended to, is, "be not overcome with
 evil, but overcome evil with good." When we are gross-
 ly abused and injured, either in person or property, it
 becomes us to show a suitable degree of resentment and
 to defend ourselves; and no exhortation requires us to
 reward or encourage a base and wicked enemy; or if it
 does, it ought not to be regarded. But to take fire at
 every little offence, or notice every trifling injury, betrays
 meanness of spirit and ignorance of human nature. It
 lessens and degrades the dignity of a man, and not only
 probably shows that such an one is guilty or faulty him-
 self; but likewise tends to widen the breach, (if any
 deserving of the name has been made,) and to open
 sources of new, and perhaps far more grievous kinds of
 animosity. But it must be acknowledged, to take a more
 enlarged and extensive view of the subject, that such is
 the unaccountable condition of human concerns; such
 the misunderstandings and differences among mankind,

which seem so unavoidable; and so many the quarrels which absolutely seem to engage duty, and involve a conscientious and imperious call to contend on both sides; it is not possible, in the nature of things, for any person to go through life, without entering the lists of strife and dispute, of some sort or other; unless he absolutely violate conscience, and set reason at defiance, nay, his religion too. The late President Adams, not long after the conclusion of the recent war with Great Britain, in his reply to the request of one of the peace societies in Massachusetts to favour them with his opinion on the subject of endeavouring to put an end to wars, expressed an opinion like this: "that he was willing to use every exertion in his power to put a period to them; but that he considered the attempt to prevent them entirely as unavailing; and that quarrels and contentions are as incident to the moral, as earthquakes and volcanoes are to the natural world." But when a shower of rain overtakes a husbandman in making his hay, he will not leave it to be wet and spoiled, but will always endeavour to save what he can. So, although thorns and briars impede us on our way through life, and make it rough and disagreeable; no prudent man will neglect shunning all of them in his power, and living as peaceably as possible.

There is a certain manliness and decision of character, which every one ought to maintain, and is opposed to the pusillanimity of cowards, and the cowering humiliation of ignoble souls, who are deterred from vindicating or asserting their rights, out of a tamely passiveness and want of spirit; but is nevertheless strictly compatible with prudence, and reconcileable to the care over one's conduct that it is incumbent on him to regard. To preserve such a portion of moderation, in the midst of the temper of mind and independence required, is perhaps, on all occasions, extremely difficult, even with those the most experienced and best acquainted with human nature; but yet all, who intend to be men in reality and practice, will study to persevere in such a course of behaviour, as will comport both with dignity and prudence.

4. THE USE AND MANAGEMENT OF MONEY.—To be prudent and economical in the concerns of property, and, at the same time, not to give way to the temptations of avarice, is doubtless with many, extremely difficult.—The right use and management of money, (being the medium of exchange for all the necessaries and conveniences of life,) is of such consequence as to well merit one's attention and reflection. Men will be fools and spendthrifts, neglect their business and misspend their time; but while talking or writing may do the least good, it is the duty of every one to do all in his power, to show the importance of prudence in pecuniary matters, as well as in every thing else. It is in vain that we are favored with good natural talents, education and knowledge, that we exert our strength of body and mind to the utmost, and are ever so industrious in lawful and laudable pursuits; and it is in vain that friends and patrons bestow their bounty upon us, if we are wanting in the single article of economy or prudence in money. A writer in the *Conn. Courant*, of accurate views, says, "that none know the worth or value of money, till they have suffered the inconveniences of being deprived of it; that the generation that immediately follows the one in possession of great riches, is generally seen to turn out very poor, and as easily rid themselves of their estates and patrimonies, as they obtained them; and that their followers being in the beginning poor, amass large fortunes, which are again disposed of by their heirs or descendants much in the same way." Very correct observations: but yet this justly extolled author will not say that warning and advice and attempts at just pictures of stupidity and distress, may not have sometimes possibly done a little good.

A man who is prudent in the management of his affairs, studies to be well acquainted with the nature of his business, its advantages, disadvantages and dangers. He retires to rest at a proper time, and is rarely in bed after sunrise. Nor is he about the streets, throwing and idling away his time; or at taverns and grog-shop or market places, spending his money for what he does not stand in

need of. He would rather suffer a little to-day, than a great deal to-morrow; and be temperate also to-day, than make a frolic of it, and then lie and groan all the while the next, on a sick bed by the side of the doctor. Is he a farmer? his tools are all ready for the laborers—his barns in order—his horses fat—his cattle thriving—and his land well fenced and manured. If he is a mechanic, he keeps a good eye over his servants, and sets them examples of frugality himself. If a merchant, he takes care to buy to advantage as well as to sell at a profit from the original cost; nor does he suffer too many fine gowns and dresses, nice broadcloths, toys and other pretty things, to be taken from his stock of goods and consumed by his own family. And if he is a professional man; he does not fail of applying his money to such purposes as will support him in his honest business.

It is a just and an old saying, that it is a great deal more difficult to lay out money to advantage, after it is once acquired, than to obtain it in the first place. The duty here, (after having discovered what can be done to advantage with it,) is not to omit doing it immediately. Immense sums are lost by default and delay; and one must not fail to take money, that makes the mare go so like a quick messenger, and procures houses, lands, furniture, apparel, meats, medicines, doctors and knowledge; we had almost said eternal life, this "root of" some good as well as "evil;" while the tide is waiting, before it leaves him for ever. Or, while wisdom tells one what to do, and calls upon him to execute; prudence urges him to be cautious as respects the time and manner, and not to rush on precipitately or without due consideration.

The son of fortune sets out in the world with much at his command; houses, lands, carriages, horses, and attendants. As his property all came upon him at once, he little concerns himself about its preservation or increase. Sharpers and interested men assail and entrap him on every side, so that, if he makes a bargain, he is most always sure to be badly cheated and tormented. He pur-

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chases what he does not want, and never can be easy without having his purse open. At length so many fine-ries and extravagant things are bought for his family, and so many bad bargains made, he is in want of money. Then the rich meadows and fertile fields, that were under the long continued care and culture of his ancestor, are made to groan under a mortgage, to secure sums that perhaps do not amount to one half the value of the premises under the incumbrance, and which moreover are never to be discharged or redeemed. And soon all his estate is wasted and gone, while perhaps himself and family are mourning the loss of necessary articles to live upon and make themselves comfortable; all for want of proper prudence in the care and management of money. This is not the case with all who thus have estates given them by their parents and friends; but it is with too many of them, as well as those who procure property by their own exertion and labour. We pass on to a consideration of prudence as respects

5. RELIGION.—This is a subject which has ever claimed, as it will eternally merit the attention of the world. Whatever be its reality or essence, all are acquainted with its name; and in the sober exercise of reason, are always ready to acknowledge, that it is something which ought to direct our conduct and teach us our duty. Some consider it as consisting of merely natural maxims or rules, doing justice, providing for ourselves and families, and reciprocating neighbourly kindnesses and benefits; while others view it as being constituted of fasting, abstinence, prayer, faith, baptism; bowing to Jesus or Mahomet, the destruction of enemies or of themselves at the stake or faggot, or in the bestowment of large sums of money, for pious uses after their decease. In short, religion, whether it be called natural or revealed, is the union or subsistence of the rules of action we are bound to observe in relation to our Creator, our fellow-men, and ourselves, exhibited to us by the Scriptures, or other good books, or by natural reason and the light of conscience. As the observance of some of them is enforced by promises of

happiness or misery for millions of ages after death, it must necessarily be, to great numbers, of vast importance and of infinite concern. It is not our province here to point out what particular denomination of religion is most correct, nor to dwell on the duties of religion in general. We are only to show the necessity and policy of acting the part of prudence in every thing we have to transact, as respects particularly the religion of Jesus, or of our own country; leaving the care of its weightier duties to its reverend teachers and ministers.

As natural justice and equity will show the impropriety of forcibly depriving men of the rights of conscience, and of restraining them in acts of devotion and worship; so common prudence and decency ought to inform them of the insult, abuse, and injury there are, in the ridicule and mockery of their sacred pæans, their supplications and petitions. There are a great many things which are accounted sacred, though they are not naturally so. To swear in the name of Jesus, in the presence of any of his humble followers, would doubtless be a violation of natural religion, by reason of the insult and contempt offered them; but for a man of the world to do so alone, would not be such a violation. Prudence, however, will ever restrain men from trampling wantonly any way by ridicule on the feelings of the religious. To ridicule a pious person in the performance of his duty, or in the exercise of the rites of his religion, can certainly do no kind of good nor afford the least satisfaction to any one. To indulge in the silly practices of cursing and swearing, and of blaspheming in the name of the Saviour, to the manifest injury of friends and pious people; is certainly very wrong, and can produce no manner of benefit. Why then employ so cutting an engine as sarcasm, against things and principles viewed as holy? why, by any method, attempt to shake the foundation of the sacred temple of piety and religion?—why not listen to the admonitions of prudence and put a period to habits which degrade and lessen one's dignity, while they reflect a contemptuous defiance and profane mockery on the religion which forbids them?

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Ridicule is a powerful and dangerous weapon. He, therefore, that would use it without regard to its consequences, ought to meet with reprehension. But when it is designedly made use of to lessen the importance of religious worship among men, and to bring into contempt the grounds of their faith, and the rules that are built upon it; surely severe admonition ought to be given to those, who thus have the temerity to disregard the sanction of prudence and duty. If any have a disposition to distinguish themselves in the practices of ridicule and jesting; there are a thousand themes which can be made choice of without recurring to any thing connected with religion. Does it not argue weakness, littleness of mind, and the height of folly, to make choice of religion as a subject of sneering and reproach, when so many vices are practised that deserve to be frowned upon and opposed?

As persons sometimes imbibe dangerous errors through haste, misguided zeal, and fanaticism, and involve themselves in much difficulty out of an undue love of the world, deceit and hypocrisy; prudence would advise all, who might wish to form correct opinions and arrive at the truth, to be cautious how they take notions that are fraught with such interest as dogmas in religion; and especially to beware of making outward professions in the name of the Almighty, touching things of everlasting concern, that are not promptly met with the love and piety of the heart; or that are not attended with such motives and views, as are made to comport with one's natural duty. A counterfeit and base coin will never stand the test before him; nor will the cobwebs of sophistry and error in any degree be supported or upheld by him, when the truth is to shine in its full lustre, and will make the pious free indeed. Let prudence then always be consulted by those who are seeking an heavenly inheritance, and by those who think it meet to profess a belief in Jesus; if they would rightly go on in the performance and discharge of their duties. Lastly, we are to conclude with

6. GENERAL REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS.—We have now taken a survey of several interesting subjects that

require, in one's conduct, an observance of the rules that are exhibited and sanctioned by prudence. And would to God it were as easy to conform to their practice, as it is to theorise and speculate about them—would to heaven men would act as nobly and prudently, as they can speak. The world remains much the same as it always has been: parsons preach, moralists write, and laws are made; but who are they that act? who will be faithful to himself? who not only studies and exerts himself to perform the great and essential duties that we are required to fulfil; but also strives to attend, in a proper manner, to all the little obligations at home and among friends, that continually demand our attention and care? An awful void, a hideous blank will be found against us all. None, or very few are in the habit of attending to every branch of these duties—prudence is forgotten and deserted by all—such is the insatiation, the weakness and depravity of human nature. But who will say that men are not for ever neglecting their time and their advantages? who can say I have obeyed my parents—honoured the aged and good—lived by honest industry—supported my family, and have besides always been prudent in the management of all the concerns, and in the performance of all the duties. I have been under obligations to attend to or fulfil? not one. How great then must be the heedlessness and misconduct of mankind; and how weighty are the obligations of all, who are moral, free agents, to strive to do good and to perform their duty, in all its stages and degrees?

In families the unhappy contentions that arise through a lack of prudence, are repeated and numerous. Fathers are arrayed against their sons, and sons mourn the loss of the friendship and aid of parents. Husbands and wives are indulging in reproach—abuse their own, and oh! the sanctuary of love, that sacred "home" of felicity and peace, becomes a bed of thorns and a gaol. Friends and neighbours are lighting the fires of discord and hatred—property is wasted in extravagance, and religion is made a mock of and ridiculed, through the stupid carelessness and criminal neglect and misconduct of those, who refuse to submit to the "easy yoke" of prudence. For one rash act, or a single unfortunate and hasty sentence, happiness takes its leave for ever—friendship and love, and charity, and candour, are refused a hearing—are never more to gild or adorn the morning hour, the youthful approach; nor to brighten the day of manhood, or solace the gloom of old age. Oh! if men would learn to walk in that path of safety and security, which is seen in an observance of the rules of prudence; what pangs would escape them, what stupidity, folly, and misery; and how calm and happy might many of their days be, that are spent by so many in riot, contention, and foolery, and in practices that lead to inevitable and swift destruction.

THE END.